

REMARKS

Review and reconsideration on the merits are requested.

Claims 1-3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite.

The Examiner questioned whether the claims are directed to two different processes (i.e., a process of measuring and a process of heat-melting). The Examiner further questioned whether the claimed transferring, heating and repeating steps are part of the process of measuring or the process of heat-melting. Also, the Examiner considered the claimed photographic reagent to be broader than that enabled by the specification which is said to only exemplify liquid preparation of a silver halide emulsion. As to the claimed “repeating” step, the Examiner questioned whether this was part of the claimed method or part of a method for preparing another liquid using the transferring and heating steps. Additionally, the Examiner considered the term “measuring” to be unclear without further also defining the quantity to be measured.

The Examiner’s comments are addressed in turn, as follows.

The invention is directed to a method of preparing a photographic reagent which requires heat-melting prior to use and in which various agents may be added to prepare a plurality of photographic reagents using the same apparatus. Although the photographic reagent may be a silver halide emulsion, and especially a silver halide emulsion for use in a heat-developable photosensitive material, and although the agent that is added thereto may be a sensitizing dye, the present invention is not limited thereto. Rather, the invention can be applied to any photographic reagent so as to solve the problem of time elapse in heat-melting and the loss and

mutual contamination of reagents in liquid preparation. See page 3, lines 12-20, and the disclosure bridging pages 10-11 of the specification.

Claim 1 has been rewritten to include four distinct steps of (i) transferring, (ii) measuring, (iii) heat-melting, and (iv) repeating for preparing additional photographic reagents, which processing steps embody the process of measuring and the process of heat-melting.

Claim 1 has also been amended to define the photographic reagent as one that requires heat-melting prior to use.

The repeating step has been clarified to recite repeating the transferring, measuring and heat-melting steps for preparing additional photographic reagents. To conform thereto, claim 1 has been further amended to recite that the invention is directed to a method for liquid preparation of one or more photographic reagents. Finally, the “measuring” step has been further defined as measuring the amount of photographic reagent. Particularly, as described at page 10 of the specification, the photographic reagent transferred into the measuring tank 96 is measured with the load cell 106, and then melted by heating with the jacket 94 while being stirred by the stirrer 95. A “load cell” is known in this field of art as being a force transducer which converts force or weight into an electrical signal. Thus, as amended, the measuring step comprises measuring the amount of the photographic reagent.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims as amended herein fully comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112, and withdrawal of the foregoing rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by, or in the alternative under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent 5,385,812 to Bagchi et al. The

Examiner cited Fig. 3 of Bagchi et al. as meeting the terms of the present claims, including measuring and melting of gelatin and other photographic reagents.

Applicants traverse, and respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider for the following reasons.

As claimed in amended claim 1, the method of the invention comprises (i) transferring a photographic reagent to a measuring tank via piping without being heated; (ii) measuring the amount of photographic reagent transferred to the measuring tank; (iii) after measuring, heat-melting the photographic reagent; and (iv) repeating steps (i) to (iii) for preparing additional photographic reagents.

Turning to the cited prior art, Fig. 3 of Bagchi et al. shows mixing of heat-melted gelatin stored in gelatin tank 82 and heated microencapsulated slurry 11 stored in MPS tank 14 via mixing chamber 34, which gelatin dispersion melt thus prepared is stored in jacketed tank 70. The amount of microencapsulated slurry and heat-melted gelatin is measured by flow meters 62 and 68, respectively.

Claim 1 differs from Fig. 3 of Bagchi et al. in that Bagchi et al. fails to disclose transferring a photographic reagent to a measuring tank via piping without being heated as required by present claim 1. Rather, in Bagchi et al., each of MPS tank 14 and gelatin tank 82 are heated tanks, tank 14 including hot water jacket 15 and gelatin tank 82 including heating jacket 50. Thus, all reagents in Bagchi et al. are heat-melted prior to being transferred. Present claim 1 differs from Fig. 3 of Bagchi et al. in that Bagchi et al. does not disclose a measuring tank as required by present claim 1. Particularly, in Bagchi et al., the relative amounts of MPS

and heat-melted gelatin are measured by flow meters 62 and 68, respectively. There is no measuring tank, and Bagchi et al. fails to disclose the claimed step of measuring the amount of photographic reagent transferred to the measuring tank. Bagchi et al. also fails to disclose step (iii), which requires after measuring, heat-melting the photographic reagent. In Bagchi et al., all photographic reagents are heat-melted prior to measuring, by flow meter or otherwise.

Withdrawal of the foregoing rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is respectfully requested.

Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bagchi et al., further in view of U.S. Patent 5,264,024 to Bostvot et al. The Examiner cited Bostvot as disclosing heat-melting a silver halide emulsion. The reason for rejection was that it would have been obvious to heat-melt a silver halide emulsion in the process of Bagchi et al. as taught by Bostvot et al. with the reasonable expectation of achieving a useful coating composition.

Applicants respectfully traverse for the following reasons.

Bostvot et al. discloses heat-melting a silver halide emulsion, but does not otherwise cure the deficiencies of Bagchi et al. For example, Bostvot et al. teaches heat-melting a silver halide emulsion in melting device 5, but there is no disclosure of transferring to a measuring tank without being heated, or measuring the amount of photographic reagent transferred to the measuring tank and then heat-melting after measuring the photographic reagent.

Withdrawal of the foregoing rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is respectfully requested.

Allowable claim 2 has been rewritten in independent form as new claim 22. Claim 2 has been canceled.

Withdrawal of all rejections and allowance of claims 1, 3 and 18-22 is earnestly solicited.

In the event that the Examiner believes that it may be helpful to advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the local Washington, D.C. telephone number indicated below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



Abraham J. Rosner
Registration No. 33,276

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC
Telephone: (202) 293-7060
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

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